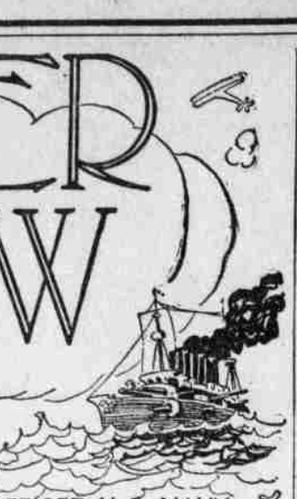
GUNNER DEPEW



by Albert N. Depew

EX-GUNNER AND CHIEF PETTY OFFICER, U. S. NAVY
MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN LEGION OF FRANCE
CAPTAIN GUN TURRET, FRENCH BATTLESHIP CASSARD
WINNER OF THE CROIX DE GUERRE

CHAPTER XIII—Continued.

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Coming back along the same road we halted to let another convoy of mules go past, and an officer of the Royal naval division came up and began talking to our officers. He was telling them how he and his men had landed at "X" beach, and how they had to wade ashore through barbed wire. "And, you know," he said in a surprised way, as if he himself could hardly believe it, "the beggars were actually firing on us!" That is just like the Limeys, though. Their idea is not to appear excited about anything at any time, but to act as though they were playing cricket—standing around on a lawn with paddles in their hands, half asleep. The Limeys are certainly cool under fire, though, and I think that because the Anzacs did so well at Gallipoli people have not given enough credit to the British regulars and R. N. D.'s, who were there too, and did their share of the work, and did it as well as any men could.

After a while this officer started on his way again, and as he cut across the road a French officer came up. The Limey wore a monocle, which caused the French officer to stare at him a minute before he saluted. After the Englishman had passed him the Frenchman took a large French penny out of his pocket, screwed it into his eye and turned toward us so that we could see it, but the Limey could not.

That was not the right thing to do, especially before enlisted men, so our officers did not laugh, but the men did, and so loud that Limey turned around and caught sight of the Frenchman. He started back toward him and I thought sure there would be a fight, or that, more likely, the Limey would report him. Our officers should have placed the Frenchman under arrest, at that.

The Frenchman expected trouble, too, for he pulled up very straight and stiff, but he left the penny in his eye. The Limey came up to him, halted a few paces off and, without saying a word, took the monocle out of his eye, twibbled it three or four feet in the air and caught it in his other eye when it came down.

"Do that, you blighter," he said and faced about and was on his way down the road. They had it on the Frenchman after that.

This Phillippe Pierre, of whom I have spoken, told me a story about two Limey officers that I hardly believed, yet Phillippe swore it was the truth. He had been in America before the war, and he said he had seen one of the officers that the story is about many times in New York.

He said there were two Limey officers going along the road arguing about the German shells which the Turks were using. One of the officers said they were no good because they did not burst. Just about that time a shell came along and they picked themselves up quite a distance from where they had been standing. Another shell whizzed by and landed flat on the side of the road. The officer walked over, dug it out of the ground, and took away the detonator and fuse—to prove that they did not explode!

The only thing that would make me believe that story is that Phillippe Pierre said they were Limey officers. No one but a Limey would remember such an argument after being knocked galley west by a shell concussion. I do not doubt that a Limey would do it if it could be done, though.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Croix de Guerre.

When we had been on the shore for about three weeks we found ourselves one morning somewhere near Sedd-el-Bahr under the heaviest fire I ever experienced. Our guns and the Turks' were at it full blast, and the noise was worse than deafening.

A section of my company was lying out in a shell hole near the communication trench with nothing to do but wait for a shell to find them. We were stiff and thirsty and uncomfortable, and had not slept for two nights. In that time we had been under constant fire and had stood off several raiding parties and small attacks from enemy trenches.

We had no sooner got used to the shell hole and were making ourselves as comfortable as possible in it when along came a shell of what must have been the Jack Johnson size, and we were swamped. We had to dig three of the men out, and though one of them was badly wounded we could not send him back to the hospital. In fact, the shelling was so heavy that none of us ever expected to come out of it alive.

So it was like keeping your own death watch, with the shells tuning up for the dirge. It was impossible to listen to the shells. If you kept your mind on the noise for any length of time it would split your eardrums, I am sure. So all we could do was to lay low in the shell hole and wait for something to happen.

Then they began using shrapnel on us, and one of our machine gunners, who got up from his knees to change position, had his head taken clean off his shoulders, and the rest of him landed near my feet and squirmed a little, like a chicken that had just been killed. It was awful to see the body without any head move around that way, and we could hardly make ourselves touch it for some time. Then we rolled it to the other side of the hole.

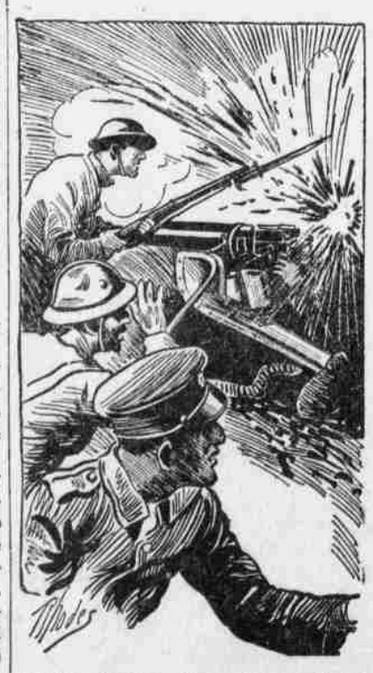
Then, to one side of us, there was a more violent explosion than any yet. The earth spouted up and fell on us, and big clouds of black smoke, sliding along the ground, covered our shell hole and hung there for some time. One of our sergeants, from the regular French infantry, said it was a shell from a Turkish 155-mm. howitzer. That was only the first one. The worst thing about them was the smoke—people who think Pittsburgh is smoky ought to see about fifty of those big howitzer shells bursting, one after another.

We could not tell what the rest of our line was doing or how we were standing the awful fire, but we felt sure they were not having any worse time than we were. In a few minutes we heard the good old "75s" start pounding, and it was like hearing an old friend's voice over the telephone, and everybody in our shell hole cheered, though no one could hear us and we could barely hear each other. Still we knew that if the "75s" got going in their usual style they would do for an enemy battery or two, and that looked good to us. The "75s" made the noise worse, but it was already about as bad as it could be, and a thousand guns more or less would not have made it any harder to stand.

One of our men shouted in the sergeant's ear that the men in line ahead of us and to the right were trying to give us a message of some kind. The sergeant stuck his head above the parapet and had a look. But I stayed where I was—the sergeant could see for himself and me, too, as far as I was concerned.

He shouted at us that the men in the other trench were trying to signal something, but he could not make it out because the clouds of smoke would roll between them and break up the words. So he laid down again in the bottom of the hole. But after a while he looked over the parapet and saw a man just leaving their trench, evidently with a message for us, and he had not gone five steps before he was blown to pieces, and the lad who followed him got his, too, so they stopped trying then.

And all the time the "75s" were sending theirs to the Turks not far over our heads to 900 yards behind



His Head Taken Clean Off His Shoulders.

us, and the howitzers were dropping their 240-pound bits of iron in every vacant space and some that were not vacant. It was just one big roar and screech and growl all at once, like turning the whole dog pound loose on a piece of meat.

The concussions felt like one long string of boxes on the ear, and our throats were so dry that it hurt to swallow, which always makes your ears feel better after a strong concussion. One after another of our boys was slipping to the ground and digging his fists into his ears, and the rest of them sat on the parapet fire step with their heads between their knees and their arms wrapped around their heads.

Our sergeant came to me after a while and began acting just like people do at a show, only he shouted instead of whispered in my ear. When people are looking at one show they always want to tell you how good some other show is, and that was the way with the sergeant.

"You should see what they did to us at St. Eloi," he said. "They just baptized us with the big fellows. They did not know when to stop. When you see shelling that is shelling, you will know it, my son."

"Well, if this is not shelling, what the devil is it? Are they trying to kid us or are you, mon vieux?" which is a French expression that means something like "old timer."

"My son, when you see dugouts caved in, roads pushed all over the map, guns wrecked, bodies twisted up in knots and forty men killed by one shell—then you will know you are seeing shelling."

Then one of our men sat up straight against the parapet and stared at us and began to shake all over, but we could not get him to say anything or move. So we knew he had shell shock. And another man watched him for a while, and then he began to shake, too. The sergeant said that if we stayed there much longer we would not be fit to repel an attack, so he ordered us into the two dugouts we had made in the hole, and only himself and another man stayed outside on watch.

The men in the dugout kept asking each other when the bombardment would end, and why we were not reinforced, and what was happening, and whether the Turks would attack us. It was easy to see why we were not reinforced—no body of men could have got to us from the reserve trenches. The communication trenches were quite a distance from us and were battered up at that. Some of the men said we had been forgotten and that the rest of our troops had either retired or advanced and that we and the men in the trench who had tried to signal us were the only detachments left there.

Pretty soon another man and I relieved the two men who were outside on watch, and as he went down into the dugout the sergeant shouted to us that he thought the Turks were afraid to attack. He also ordered one of us to keep a live eye toward our rear in case any of our troops should try to signal us. When I looked through a little gully at the top of the hole, toward the other trench, all I could see was barbed wire and smoke and two or three corpses. I began to shiver a little, and I was afraid I would get shell shock, too. So I began to think about Murray and how he looked when they took him off the wall. But that did not stop the shivering, so I thought about my grandmother and how she looked the last time I saw her. I was thinking about her, I guess, and not keeping a very good lookout, when a man rolled over the edge and almost fell on me. He was from the other trenches. I carried him into the dugout and then went out again and stood my watch until the relief came. We were doing half-hour shifts.

When I got into the dugout again the man was coming to. He was just about as near shell shock as I had been—by this time I was shivering only once in a while, when I did not watch myself. He said four men had been sliced up trying to get to us before he came; that they had lost 11 men out of their 32, including the sergeant-major in command and two corporals; that they were almost out of ammunition; that the trenches on both sides of them had been blown in and that they were likely to go to pieces at any moment. He said they all thought the Turks would attack behind their barrage, for he said the curtain of fire did not extend more than a hundred yards in front of their trench. What they wanted us to do was to relay a man back with the news and either get the word to advance or retire or await reinforcements, they did not care which—only to be ordered to do something. There was not a commissioned officer left with either of the detachments, you see, and you might say we were up in the air—only we were really as far in the ground as we could get.

The man thought there were other of our lines not far behind us, but we knew better; so then he said he did not see how any one could get back from there to our nearest lines. I did not see either. Then we all figured we were forgotten and would not come out of there alive, and you can believe me or not, but I did not much care. Anything would be better than just staying there in that awful noise with nothing to do, and no water.

Our sergeant said he would not ask any man to attempt to carry the message, because he said it was not only certain death, but absolutely useless. And he began to show that he was near shell shock himself.

Then I began to shiver again, and I thought to myself that anything would be better than sitting in this hole waiting to go "cafard," so I decided to volunteer. I did not think there was any chance to get through, but it seemed as if I just had to do something, no matter what. I had never felt that way before, and had never been anxious to "go west" with a shell for company, but I have felt that way since then several times, I can tell you.

The man was telling us that some time before they had seen the Turks bringing up ammunition from some storehouses, but they did not come anywhere near. He said their sergeant wanted our messenger to tell them that, too. He would say a few words very fast, then he would shiver again, and his jaws would clip together and he would try to raise his hand, but could not.

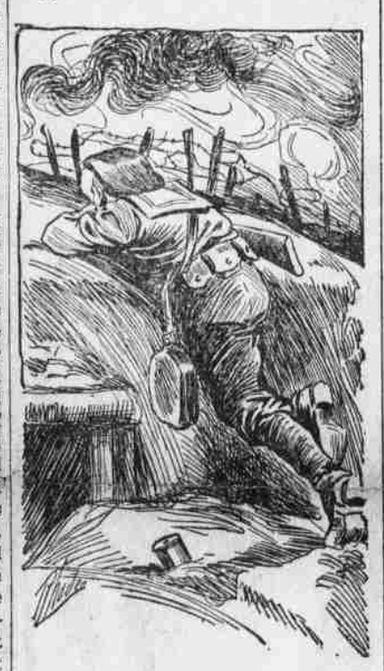
Then our sergeant asked the name of the other sergeant, and when the man told him he said the man was senior to himself and therefore in command and would have to be obeyed.

He seemed to cheer up a lot after he said this and did not shiver any more, so I thought I would volunteer then, so I said to him, "Well, mon vieux, do you think we are seeing real shelling now?" And then I was going to say I would go, but he looked at me in a funny way for a second and then said, "Well, my son, suppose you go and find out."

I thought he was kidding me at first, but then I saw he meant it. I thought two things about it—one was that anything was better than staying there, and the other was that the old dugout was a pretty fair place after all. But I did not say anything to the sergeant or the other men—just went out of the dugout. The sergeant and another man went with me and boosted me over the back wall of the hole. I lay flat on the ground for a minute to get my bearings, and then started off.

I set my course for where I thought the communication trenches were, to the right, and I just stood up and ran, for I figured that as the shells were falling so thick and it was open ground I would not have any better chance if I crawled.

I tripped several times and went down, and each time thought I was hit, because when I got it in the thigh at Dixmude it felt a good deal as though I had tripped over a rope. And one time when I fell a shell exploded near me and I began to shiver again, and I could not go on for a long time. All this time I did not



All I Could See Was Barbed Wire and Smoke.

think I would get through, but finally, when I reached what had been the communication trench I felt I had done the worst part of it, and I began to wish very hard that I would get through—I was not at all crazy about going west.

The mouth of the communication trench had been battered in and the trenches it joined with were all filled up. There were rifles sticking out of them in several places, and I thought probably the men had been buried alive in them. But it was too late then, if they had been caught, so I climbed over the blocked entrance to the communication trench and started back along it. It led up through a sort of gully, and I thought it was a bad place to dig a communication trench in, because it gave the Turks something like the side of a hill to shoot at.

Every once in a while I would have to climb in and out of a shell hole, and parts of them were blocked where a shell had caved in the walls. In one place I saw corpses all torn to pieces, so I knew the Turks had found the range and had got to this trench in great shape. At another place I found lots of blood and equipment but no bodies, and I figured that reinforcements had been caught at this spot and that they had retired, taking their casualties with them.

The Turks still had the range, and they were sending a shell into the trench every once in a while, and I was knocked down again, though the shell was so far away that it knocked me down with force of habit more than anything else. I felt dizzy and shivered a lot, and kept trying to think of Murray or anything else but myself.

So finally I got to the top of the little hill over which the gully ran, and on the other side I felt almost safe. Just down from the crest of the hill was one of our artillery positions, with the good old "75s" giving it to the Turks as fast as they could. I told the artillery officers what had happened, had a drink of water and thought I would take a nap. But when they telephoned the message back to division headquarters the man at the receiver said something to the officer and he told me to stay there and be ready. I thought sure he would send me back to where I came from and I knew I never could make it again, but I did not say anything.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Electric locomotives are being increasingly adopted in South Africa for underground haulag

TENNESSEE

BRIEFLY TOLD EVENTS OF THE STATE

Nashville.—State Geologist Wilbur A. Nelson returned from the upper part of the state, where his department, in cooperation with the United States geological survey, is engaged in oil and gas work. Charles Butts of Washington is in charge of the survey party, assisted by H. E. Hamilton, traverse man of the Tennessee geological survey.

A detail oil and gas structural map will be made by the party now in the field, showing the best locations for drilling. Two wells in the area embraced in Pickett, Overton and Clay counties have already been drilled and a fair amount of oil is being secured. There are other places in the area where it is thought that other wells will soon be in operation.

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Bristol.—Damage done by the big fire which wiped out two of the largest buildings in the business district and three smaller structures, is estimated at a half million dollars. The Dosser Bros.' department store, a new building, is a total loss. Thousands of dollars in dry goods were destroyed in the Mahoney-Jones dry goods house. Rain falling shortly after the alarm was turned in probably saved other property, as a high wind carried sparks over the entire city.

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Jackson.—The farmers of Madison county who raise registered swine met here and organized a swine association. J. S. Johnson and Judd Brooks were elected respectively temporary president and secretary. A membership fee of $5 was levied, to be used in developing the purposes of the organization, whose main object is to encourage the raising of high grade registered hogs.

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Nashville—Fuel Administrator W. E. Myer announced that no change had been ordered with reference to lightless nights in Tennessee. "Tennessee will still observe Monday and Tuesday nights as lightless, as formerly," said Mr. Myer. "The people of Tennessee should not forget," he said, "that this state's quota in the fuel conservation plan is 375,000 tons of coal between now and April, 1919."

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Chattanooga.—According to reliable information all army cantonments in the southeast are to be dismantled and abandoned, with the exception of Fort Oglethorpe, Ga.; Camp Jackson, S. C., and Camp Gordon, Atlanta. Men now at the camps to be abandoned will be either sent home or transferred to the cantonments which are to become permanent. It is said that over 40,000 men are to be kept at Fort Oglethorpe.

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Columbia.—The National Foxhunters' Association meet opened here with an attendance surpassing that of all other meets. A hundred hunters, with 500 dogs from a dozen states or more represented the visitors.

W. J. Dudley of Sullivan, Ind., with his dog Fannie D., won the championship in the bench show of the National Fox Hunters' association.

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Nashville.—The supreme court of Tennessee will hold a special meeting here Dec. 9 to hear arguments in the suit brought to have the antifee law, enacted by the last general assembly, declared invalid. The law, which applies to 13 of the largest counties of the state, places all county officials on a salary, abolishing the fee system.

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Savannah, Ga.—Mrs. Jodie C. Forrester has been advised of the death of her husband, Sergt. Jodie C. Forrester, on the transport Otranto, lost off the Scottish coast several weeks ago. He left from Fort Scriven and had been in the service six years. His parents live at Pinson, Tenn.

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Washington.—Fourth-class postmasters appointed in Tennessee are: Fruitland, Gibson county, Annie L. McKinley; Linden, Perry county, James D. Daniel; Saltillo, Hardin county, Franklin D. Duck; Whit Thorn, Carroll county, John R. Holmes.

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Chattanooga.—Official notice of the death of Capt. Joseph F. Gafney, Company F, One Hundred and Seventeenth Infantry, Thirtieth Division, in the drive between Cambrai and St. Quentin, was received here.

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Knoxville. — The city commission unanimously adopted a resolution rescinding the skip-stop system for the Knoxville Railway & Light company. The system became effective in Knoxville July 23.

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Lexington.—The pupils of Lexington training school are proud of their record in the "earn and give" division of the war work drive. Their contributions aggregated $550.

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Gallatin.—It is reported that sheep-killing dogs are on the rampage in Sumner county. Farmers are taking drastic steps to stamp out the curse.

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Memphis.—There will be no referendum vote on the six-cent street car fare proposition here. The Memphis Street Railway company addressed a communication to the city commission asking permission to withdraw the referendum petitions which the company had prepared, had signed and filed. This communication was presented to the city commission and on motion was received and filed. The commission instructed the city clerk to notify the Shelby county election commission to postpone action on the request for an election until further notice.

An ordinary human being uses up 267 cubic feet of air each 24 hours.

The Chinese do not, as a rule, appreciate foreign sweetmeats.